

# Ratliff Oak

Bayou Lil Caillou

5772 Hwy 56

Chauvin, LA

[Google Map](#)



The Ratliff Oak remains the largest, oldest and the last large oak tree left on Bayou Petit Caillou. At the time of the survey of the area after the Louisiana Purchase, hard wood trees like the Ratliff Oak covered the area of lower Bayou Petit Caillou. The *Witness Tree Book* in the Terrebonne Conveyances Office indicates that hardwoods like live oaks and maples marked the boundary lines of the townships and ranges with the brand of the surveyor. Those trees are long gone, lost to saltwater intrusion, and coastal erosion.

The Ratliff Oak is on the former property of Desire J. Theriot born in 1889 to Ludovic and Amanda Falgout Theriot, he is descended from Theogene Theriot of Lafourche Crossing and one of the first inhabitants of Bayou Dularge. The tree presumably planted by Desire's father according to Dot-Tee Theriot Ratliff, owner of the property since the early 1990's. Dot-tee is also one of the granddaughters of Mr. Desire. Family tradition speaks of her grandfather being born on the property of his father. Mr. Desire, a raconteur, shared stories with his grandchildren of playing under the big tree as a child. Therefore, it is difficult to know the estimated date of planting.

The DBH (Diameter at Breast Height) estimates the tree to be in excess of 100 years old, with considerations of being in soil threatened by high water levels of brackish water, known to stunt the growth of live oaks.

The Ratcliff Oak tree has a co-joined trunk at about 5 feet that adds to the massive nature of the tree.

Individual massive branches over five feet around guide the branches as they reach toward the lovingly restored old house. This live oak and other younger live oak trees shelter Art Gecko Studio owned by Dot-tee Theriot Ratliff. The studio building is at the rear of the home, under the shelter of another not-so-old live oak.

Desire Theriot beginning in the 1930s became the manager of the Indian Ridge shrimp factory and cannery owned by the Chauvin family in the area of Boudreaux Canal which is located between Chauvin and Cocodrie, LA. He was a well-known and liked individual looking out for his employees and the shrimp industry.—Story written by Laura Browning.

[Findagrave Desire Theriot](#)



Photos by Trudy Voisin Hebert

